

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2204

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to state academic standards.

Brief Description: Providing assistance for students who have not been successful in scoring at the proficient level on the WASL.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 3/2/05 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to return the results of the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) by June 1 in any year beginning no later than the 2006-07 school year.
- Requires school districts to offer summer school for high school students who score below the basic level in any content area of the high school WASL and requires students to either attend summer school or score at or above the basic level on the assessment. If students don't do one or the other, they will retain sophomore status.
- Requires SPI to provide, and school districts to administer, diagnostic assessments for 10th through 12th grade students who score below the proficient level in any content area of the WASL.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; P. Sullivan, Vice Chair; Talcott, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Curtis, Haigh, Hunter, McDermott, Santos and Shabro.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

Beginning with the graduating class of 2008, most students will be required to obtain a Certificate of Academic Achievement (Certificate) in order to graduate from a public high school in the state. Students must attain the proficient level in reading, writing, and

mathematics on the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) in order to earn the Certificate. Science is added to the Certificate in 2010.

About 65 percent of the high school students who took the WASL in the 2003-04 school year scored at or above the proficient level in reading and writing. About 44 percent of the students were proficient in mathematics and 32 percent were proficient in science. The percentages of students of color who scored at the proficient level tended to be lower than the state average. For example, with the exception of Asian students, the percentages of students of color who met the proficient level in mathematics were: 16 percent of African-American students, 20 percent of Hispanic students, and 23 percent of American Indian students. The percentages are even lower for students in special programs. Five and one-half percent of special education students and about 10 percent of students with limited English proficiency attained the proficient level in mathematics on the WASL.

Summary of Bill:

Beginning no later than the 2006-07 school year, the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) will return the results of the high school Washington Assessment of Student Learning WASL to school districts no later than June 1 of any year for any content area required for the Certificate.

The SPI will provide diagnostic instruments that school districts may use to assist high school students in the 10th through 12th grades who are not on track to graduate on time. The instruments will be provided to school districts at no charge to be used to help shape the student plans that districts are required to prepare for the students.

By the 2006-07 school year, school districts will prepare student learning plans for 10th and 11th grade students who were not successful in any content area of the high school WASL. The plan will include summer school for students who score below the basic level in any content area of the assessment. For students who met the proficient level in at least two content areas and the basic level in any other area, the plan will include assistance during the school year.

The SPI will create and make available model curricula and instructional materials that school districts may use in high school summer programs that are provided to students who have not scored at the proficient level in the content areas required for the Certificate.

Each school district will provide diagnostic assessments and a summer school program for 10th through 12th grade students who are required to obtain the Certificate but who score below the basic level in any content area on the WASL. The program may serve any student who scores below the proficient level in any content area of the assessment. The Legislature intends that the summer school programs have small class sizes taught by highly qualified certificated staff.

Each 10th through 12th grade student who is required to obtain a Certificate in order to graduate will take diagnostic assessments provided by the school district if the student scores below the proficient level in any content area of the high school WASL.

Each high school student who is required to obtain a Certificate in order to graduate but who scores below the basic level in any content area of the WASL will retain sophomore status until the student either attends summer school or scores at or above the basic level in all content areas.

A null and void clause is included.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 2, 2005.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passes except for section 1 relating to SPI provide diagnostic tools and model summer school programs, that school districts offer summer school to struggling high school students and that the students either attend summer school, meet assessment requirements, or retain sophomore status which takes effect August 31, 2006. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Testimony For: Many students are leaving high school without the skills and knowledge necessary to attend college, earn a living wage, or compete in the international marketplace. In order to give students a chance in life, the state has adopted a graduation requirement to give meaning to the high school diploma. Since many students will not meet that graduation requirement without extra time and attention, the state needs to get serious about providing remediation and other forms of assistance to high school students who are not meeting the state's academic standards. This is an investment in our children's future and is part of the state's paramount duty. Although remediation is necessary for students who are currently in middle and high schools, investments in early learning are also necessary to prevent some or all of that need in later years. The issue of making sure that students are able to graduate from high school is the number one concern of parents. It is of special concern to the families of children of color since 80 percent or more of some student groups are not yet on track to meet the state standards in subjects like math. Schools need additional resources to help students get there. The resources include diagnostic tools to discern where students need help and summer school or extended learning during the school year to give students the extra time necessary to learn the material covered by the state standards.

(Concerns) Districts will need to have the costs of summer school and other assistance for high school students fully funded, a prospect that may be difficult to meet under the current revenue outlook. Students from poor families often need to work in the summer, so attending summer school may not be feasible for some of them. Returning the WASL results by June 1 may be technically challenging or expensive.

Testimony Against: The WASL is a flawed assessment that should be abandoned by the state.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Hunter, prime sponsor; Uriel Iniguez, Hispanic Commission; Robert Butts, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; and Don Rash, Association of Washington School Principals.

(With concerns) Mary Kenfeld, State Parent Teacher Association.

(Opposed) LaCrese Green, citizen.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.